

NEXT WEEK: "COMMON CLAY," AT THE GARRICK; KELLERMANN FILM AT THE CHESTNUT

Mysteries of Marketing Million-Dollar Movies

How William Fox Spent a Fortune on "A Daughter of the Gods" and How He Can Get It Back Again

By ROGER W. BABSON

The following article by Roger W. Babson, perhaps America's leading authority on industry and finance, gives an insight into the mystery which William Fox spent on the production of "A Daughter of the Gods," but which the fascinating angles of the movie picture industry by which profit may be made from an investment which would normally be a loss.

RECENTLY on the island of Jamaica, I was with Herbert Brenon (who first made his reputation as the director of "Neptune's Daughter") while he was preparing a play at a cost of perhaps \$1,000,000.

For the setting of this new play an old Moorish fort was necessary, so the sunny sands were searched in order to get one. The most suitable one was found half under water near Kingston, Jamaica. It was called Fort Augusta. To pump out the water, drain the land, kill the mosquitoes and all in cost \$100,000. But this was only the beginning.

The story made it necessary that a Moorish city should be built behind the fort. In this city must be a real palace, an actual town market, stores of all kinds and everything else that one sees in an old Moorish city. Moreover, these stores must be full of goods—cloth, pottery, baskets, provisions, etc.; the streets must be full of people and all the people must be black and have oriental costumes.

Such a city was built, so that when a stranger entered the harbor of Kingston, Jamaica, in February of this year this new city was more in evidence than was old Kingston itself. It is certainly more spectacular. To build this city is said to have cost between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000. To transplant one coconut tree cost \$200, while it cost \$1000 just to repair a spongy log on the old wall.

But the building of the city was only a part of the expense. As I have said, it was populated, and all of the inhabitants had to be hired at from 50 cents a day upward. The day I was there 750 men were performing. For the day on which I left Jamaica more than 3000 were engaged and some days the number ran up to 10,000, all of whom must be provided with costumes and many with helmets, spears and bows and arrows.

And yet this great Moorish city, costing half a million dollars, is only one scene of the story. But all this expenditure is based on reason. The only wonder is that more people did not have the sense to anticipate such achievements. Any one who had stopped to think it over could easily have foreseen that the presentation of any big spectacle was sure to be a money-making proposition without the slightest risk. This is a result of the law of averages.

When a regular theatrical company is formed to stage some great play with a famous star, it can appeal each night to only one audience. If the house is full and the audience is receptive, the investment, but if not it falls. At the most the receipts are limited to the seats of one theater and for the time being to the interest of one community. With movie production it is entirely different.

When a movie company gets a big star

There is no training in the world like that which one gets by having to put on a pair of tights, dancing down to the footlights and singing, singing and singing. Whether a girl aspires to play Lady Macbeth or ingenue roles, I would prescribe the same training. Indeed, so great an advocate am I of the musical comedy school that I will go so far as to say that it is an excellent substitute for the now moribund stock company system, the training of which is being lamented quite as much in England as it is here. In certain respects musical comedy offers greater and better opportunities in a season or so to master technique, or rather, I should say the big essentials of technique, which might require years of stock company apprenticeship.

When the Hippodrome show, "Hip, Hip Hooray," is displayed at the Metropolitan this evening, it is safe to say that the dainty ice skater, Charlotte, will carry off first honors, as she did in New York. But it is only the aid of these men who scrape the ice-covered stage after every performance, that the elf of the rink can work her magic.

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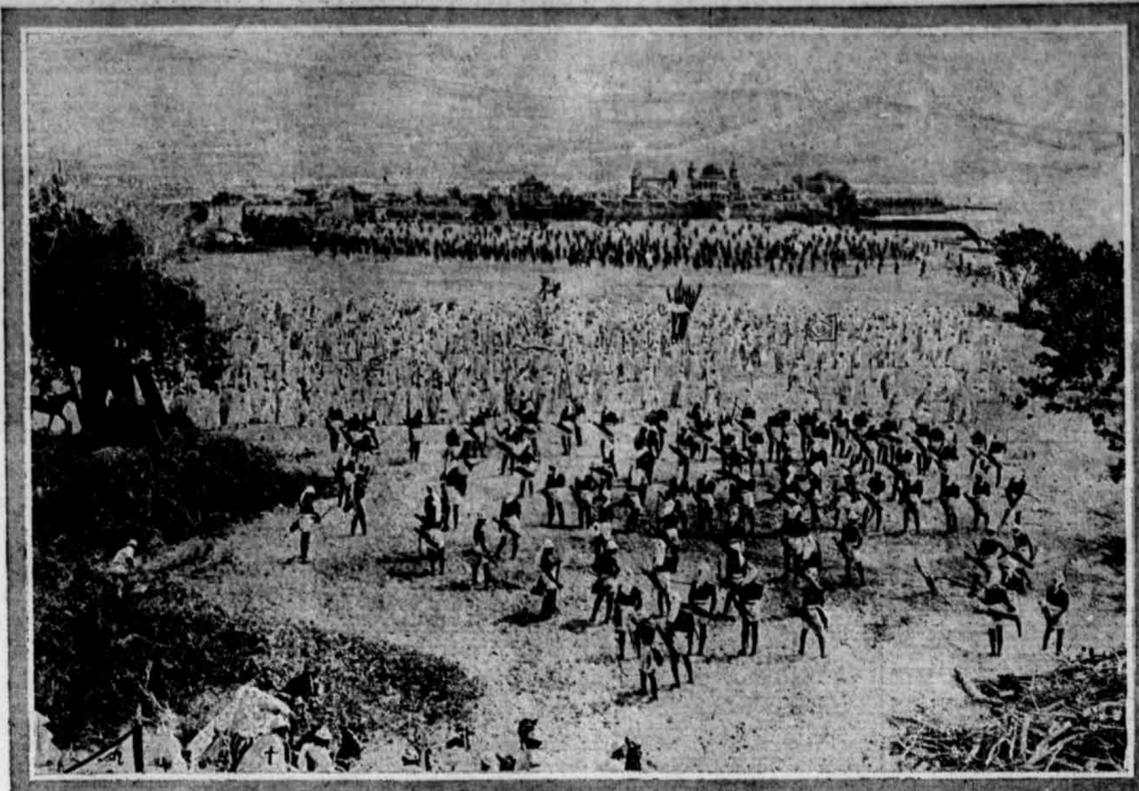
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THE MAMMOTH MAGIC OF THE SCREEN



Just a corner from the new photoplay spectacle, "A Daughter of the Gods," in which William Fox will present Annette Kellermann at the Chestnut Street Opera House next week. Here we see the Moorish city built in Jamaica for the taking of this single picture and a part of the armies of supernumeraries which battled for its possession.

REALISM WHILE THE ACTORS EAT

"Go get a story out of the stage luncheon at the Adelphi," commanded the dramatic editor. "Make it real; tell just what the actors said while eating between the two matinees. Actuality; that's what we want."

The party followed the "milkmen's matinee" at 10 o'clock, a distinct novelty. Here is what happened, at least to one pair of ears:

"Ladies, be seated... Hey, an olive please... Myrtle, get anything on your hip?... Yes, please, my dear... Oh, these high-brows, butting in here!... Sit, Olga! let the poor old scribes have a potato or two. They look kinda skinny... Ladies, only fifteen minutes till the overture... Oh, Will, you let me finish my ice cream!... Whoops, there's Lady Duff-Gordon and Madame Butterfly... Pardon me, please, I noticed you weren't drinking yours... At the Walton, four years ago, Len... I wish he wouldn't do the Chaplin act with his soup... But, Miss McManus, you haven't consumed a thing... Curtain, curtain, and be careful of the cigarettes... Yes, it was verry nice... Hurry, girls!... All of which proves the oft-doubted theory that actors do eat. And how's the above story for realism?"

When a cast plays in the old way its capacity is absolutely limited each day to the capacity of the theater. Hence there is almost a physical limit to the amount of money which can be spent profitably in the production of a play. In the new method, however, the movie camera is used to show every night to thousands of audiences. Moreover, the audience is not confined to any one theater, but as theaters are a universal country, with this thought in mind it will be seen that there really is not so much to be made from a million dollars for one production before the camera as in spending a few thousand dollars for one Broadway production to be shown along the old lines.

IT WILL BE FROSTY AT THE "MET" TONIGHT

This last week work was completed at the Metropolitan on a new stage, which will permit the introduction of a complete pond of real ice, as one of the features of the Hippodrome show, "Hip, Hip Hooray," which comes to Philadelphia tonight.

It remained for Charles Dillingham to offer, at the Hippodrome last season one of the few real novelties the theatrical world has seen in recent years, the ice spectacle which closes "Hip, Hip Hooray," and entitled, "Pirating at St. Moritz."

Varied uses of the immense pool in the Hippodrome have been made ever since the great show place opened its doors. Always until this last season these uses have been associated with the employment of water in some form. But last season marked the first time that this most novel feature of the show place was frozen solid and used for the presentation on the stage of a genuine winter scene.

For the first time in the history of stage effects Philadelphia theatergoers will see a pool 6x14 feet in size and completely filling every inch of the largest stage in this State, employed in a skating scene.

The stage mechanics have finished constructing a new stage out into sections approximately twelve by six feet. These sections rest on a framework of iron girders, which are supported by a series of mammoth planks, four in number. The ice stage possible, the iron structure has been lowered to a depth of eighteen inches. Upon this framework there is placed a system of pipes, through which is run brine treated to a fine spray of hot water. When the hot water has evened the ice to a level surface, the plant is started to work and a new coat of about one-eighth of an inch is frozen.

"Katinka" is doing too well in Boston to cast an eye of interest in the direction of Philadelphia just yet. So, instead, patrons of the Lyric will see "The Girl from Brazil" on October 23. The new piece is a musical comedy now out, "Broadway" which starts with a scene in Norway and ends in the tropic climes of Brazil. Sigmund Romberg, composer of many a Winter Garden show and interpolator to "Her Soldier Boy," wrote the music.

THEATRICAL JOTTINGS FROM HERE AND THERE

The Broad has some excellent plays in prospect. Following "Hilo Grande," which opens a week from Monday, come Laurette Taylor and Otis Skinner. The vehicle in which Mr. Skinner will visit his native city for the first time in many seasons is "Mister Antonio," a comedy by Booth Tarkington now visible in New York. Mr. Skinner plays the part of an organ grinder. Miss Taylor is due on November 13 in a new play by her husband, J. Hartley Manners, who wrote "Peg o' My Heart"; it is called "The Harp of Life."

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Grand Slam—A Game of Critical Contrasts

PERCY HAMMOND, dramatic critic of the Chicago Tribune, has invented a new game. He calls it "Separating the Sheep From the Goats," but "Grand Slam" would be a better name. To begin with, you have to have a Constant Reader. The Constant Reader asks the Dramatic Critic for a guide to his "baffling opinions," and the "guide," for some absurd reason, is supposed to be a list of examples of the worst acting which the critic has seen and another list of the best.

Of course, the whole point of the game is that the Dramatic Critic tries as hard as possible to provide a whimsical set of contrasts. Here are some of Mr. Hammond's lists.

FRANCIS X AT HIS PHOTOPLAY ZENITH

Poor supporting companies are just as frequent in the movies as in the legitimate, and on that account it's pleasant to credit the Metro Company with a good mark for their cast of "Romeo and Juliet," which comes to the Victoria Theater for the entire week of October 22. There are a number of capital players from the speaking stage among the aggregation of persons supporting Francis X. Bushman and Beverly Bayne, cinema stars pure and simple, though Mr. Bushman used to be before the footlights. Some have been successful in Shakespeare in particular.

Fritz Lehner, the Mercutio, is certainly remembered in Philadelphia for his many appearances with Robert Mantell in Shakespearean repertory. W. Lawson Butt, brother of the singer, Clara Butt, made a favorable Philadelphia impression in "The Garden of Allah," at the Forrest some years ago. Her now plays Tybalt. Robert Cummings was once with the Orpheum Players, and Lionel Belmont was stage manager for Faversham during local engagements. Ethel Mantell, who charts Rosaline, is the daughter of the noted tragedian.

Robert Vivian used to act in Ben Greet's company in the Metro piece he does a member of the Capulet family. Lewis Sealy came here in Shaw's "Fanny's First Play." E. P. Sullivan is always recalled for his impersonation of the Henry Irving in "The Belle" when it was taken for the movies by Reliance. We hardly have to suggest to you who Violet Hall-Caine is, do we?

AS MATTER OF FACT, success in this game of critical contrasts isn't at all difficult. Make as honest a list as you can; take your eye resolutely off the gallery, limit your choice to seven bad and seven good cases and your field to the last year in Philadelphia—and still you can't help producing an amusing mixture. Here are the lists of the Evening Ledger's critic:

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"Mr. Lazarus" The New Year's Greatest Failure

So New York May Speak of the Worthy Little Comedy

Waiting a bit before telling Philadelphia about plays seen in New York is sometimes a very good thing. The perspective of time plays many pleasant tricks. For instance, it enables the Evening Ledger's critic to write a commendatory review of "Mr. Lazarus" and to call it the season's greatest failure. For this new comedy by Harvey J. O'Higgins and Harriet Ford had decided points when it decorated the Schubert Theater a couple of weeks ago; and now, alas! it is departed.

Some people treasure the absurd notion that America ought to be producing play-wrights in the image of Ibsen, Shaw, Galsworthy, Pinero. They expect writers of mordant realism, philosophic comedy, sophisticated drama, like to spring, full-armed from a brain that hasn't yet the Jovian development of the age-old Continent. Quite properly the American play-wrights are doing nothing of the kind. Neither they nor their plays make pretenses at the "intellectual." America has been too busy living and making. But our theater has evolved a type of honesty, simple, straightforward comedy that is full of accurate sketches of our average life today. If sometimes we achieve a drama of intellectual and emotional power, it will be a natural evolution from the plays and play-wrights of today that are content to picture our life and grow with it. Men like George M. Cohan lead these legions. The authors of "Mr. Lazarus," Harvey O'Higgins and Harriet Ford, deserve a very honorable place because they write about what they know and they don't strain—as do some of our Cohan—for violent comic "points."

"Mr. Lazarus" is a comedy with an elaborately fanciful idea which is firmly and consistently prevented from running away with the humanness of the story. Briefly, Mr. Lazarus is a gentleman who returns from the dead. Once upon a time—twenty years ago—he was one John Molloy, honey-mooning on an express train that became a burning wreck and in which a man with a name some other incidentals put him in the permanently missing class. So when John returned as a prosperous man under the name of Lazarus, he found his wife and his posthumous daughter slaving in a boarding house to provide support for a new head of the family. A number of other things, such as an art student with the usual pocket, but a quiet, unconventional sense of humor; a love affair between this young man and the daughter and sundry financial tricks of the trade, are scattered about Mr. Lazarus very busy straightening out his family through four pleasant acts. Ultimately his love for his daughter and his love for the girl who was once his wife were overborne by the exactions of living with the querulous, strange woman who was once his wife—and Mr. Lazarus departed. Behind him he left the message, "The dead cannot return."

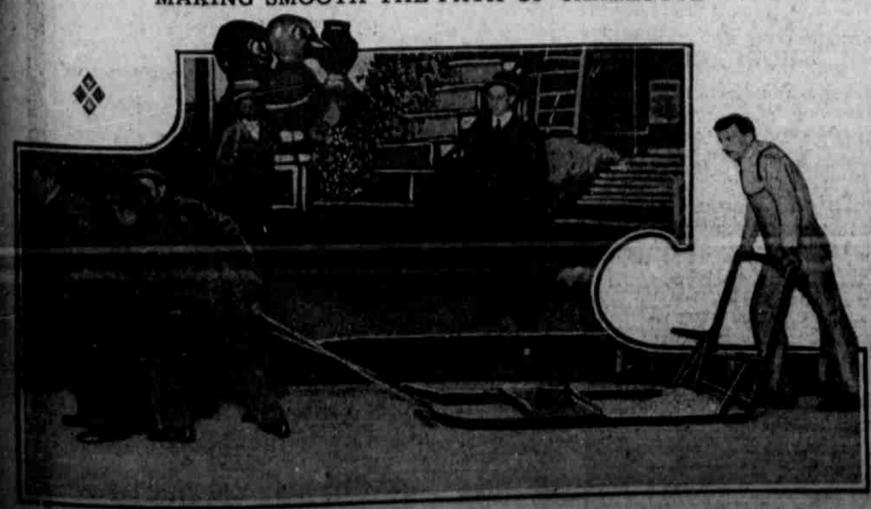
It is an interesting, if not exacting, fable. What made it seem just a little more than ordinary was the kindly obsequy of life which the authors brought to its telling. They were qualities which America is developing, but which it doesn't always control with so even and judicious a hand. "Mr. Lazarus" is a big step ahead for the authors of "The Dummy" and "The Argyle Case."

As for the acting, that is presumably a thing every man of the past. Miss Story should be recorded that Henry Dixey, who played the title part, is still a skillful comedian. William T. Clarke and Florin Arnold played with their familiar union; the American stage acquired two intelligent and original young players in Eva Le Gallienne and Tom Powers, and that George Henry Traylor did an excellent bit of stage direction in its staging. What more can you ask of a "failure"?

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MAKING SMOOTH THE PATH OF CHARLOTTE



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FOOTBALL REVISED BY JOE CAWTHORN

MR. CAWTHORN—I tell you, Duke, I consider football the greatest game that was ever invented. I never see a fine body of men racing out to the field of deadly combat that my bosom does not heave with pride and enthusiasm. It reminds me of my younger days.

Mr. Brian (the Duke)—So you used to play football, did you?

Mr. Cawthorn—Did I play football? Why, I was considered one of the greatest drawbacks on our team. —From "Sybil."

A BALLADE OF MINSTRELSY

The plays arrive, the plays depart. The plays with interest drift to and fro. The plays with interest drift to and fro. The plays with tempo fast or slow. Still here one thing that does not go. A broth with many a dash of cork. To shift the figure—a minstrel show. A second act may like the well-known brook.

Oh, pret of "Sybil" in the past. Theatrical, or if you know 'em, "Common Clay" just start. Upon the Garick's tale of woe. Or shudder at the battle-slow. That bygone "Her Soldier Boy" to book. Yet bear in mind the black and white. Dumont's goes on, like the well-known brook.

"Experience" has got a start. Upon its run; Will the Woods offices in New York, and it is a dull day that does not find her finishing the copious notes of five plays a day to be sent on to Mr. Woods. She has her secretary do the actual work, but the mental work is all her own.

Another interesting phase of this work is the method employed. Either Mr. Cowl comes into the Woods offices in New York, and it is a dull day that does not find her finishing the copious notes of five plays a day to be sent on to Mr. Woods. She has her secretary do the actual work, but the mental work is all her own.

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SIGMUND ROMBERG IS A LYRIC MAN INDEED

Most of the musical numbers in "The Girl From Brazil," the new musical comedy coming to the Lyric, are of American make, although they have the old Vienna flavor. In other words, about half of the present score was written in New York by Sigmund Romberg, who wrote incidental numbers for "Her Soldier Boy," too, while the remainder represents what Robert Winterberg wrote for the original production in Vienna. "Her Soldier Boy" is now at the Lyric.

Here is a bit of Romberg biography for the composer's admirers: Romberg came to this country six years ago. He had studied in Vienna under Victor Hemberger, composer of many musical comedies; but on his arrival here Romberg found it would be necessary, if he was to achieve real popularity, to supplement his classical training with a vigorous course of experimentation in American rhythms. For three years he applied himself to this form of composition, at the same time studying the English language and its relation to the art of putting a song over the footlights.

That his preparation had its reward is proved by the fact that he is responsible for the score of seven Winter Garden shows and has never been allowed by the Shuberts to work for any other producers. Among the successes to Romberg's credit are: "Maid in America," "A World of Pleasure," which contained the "Bagtime Pipe of Fun";